

Brazilian Sign Language

Brazilian Sign Language (BSL) is the sign language used by deaf communities of urban Brazil. It is also known as **Libras** (Portuguese pronunciation: [ˈlibɾəs], from *Língua Brasileira de Sinais* [ˈlĩɡwɐ bɾaziˈlejɾɐ dʒi siˈnajs]) and variously abbreviated as LSB, LGB or LSCB (Brazilian Cities Sign Language).^[4]

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Brazilian Sign Language	
Libras	
Native to	Brazil and Brazilian diaspora
Region	Urban areas
Native speakers	200,000 (2010) ^[1]
Language family	Language isolate ? ^[2]
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	bzs
Glottolog	braz1236 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/braz1236) ^[3]

Recognition and status

Brazilian Sign Language is well-established; several dictionaries, instructional videos and a number of articles on the linguistic features of the language have been published. It has dialects across Brazil reflecting regional and sociocultural differences.

A strong sign language law was passed by the National Congress of Brazil on April 24, 2002, and (in 2005) is in the process of being implemented.^[5] The law mandates the use of Brazilian Sign Language in education and government services.

Educational approaches have evolved from oralism to Total Communication and bilingualism.

Alphabet

BSL fingerspelling uses a one-handed manual alphabet similar to that used by the French Sign Language family.^[6]

There are 44 distinct handshapes used in the language.^[4]

Writing



Signwriting used on outside of school for deaf in Santa Maria, Rio Grande do Sul

Sutton SignWriting is the dominant writing system in Brazil.^[7] A master's in linguistics dissertation titled "A arte de escrever em Libras" (<https://repositorio.ufsc.br/handle/123456789/177791>) by Gabriela Otaviani Barbosa found that SignWriting is used in 18 Federal Universities and in 12 public schools in Brazil. The History of SignWriting in Brazil appeared on TV INES in 2017: "A Vida em Libras – SignWriting – Escrita de Sinais" (<http://tvines.ines.gov.br/?p=16704>).

Historical efforts were commonly transcribed using Portuguese words, written in upper case, to stand for each equivalent BSL morpheme.^[8]

Transcription of BSL signs using SignWriting has been in place since at least 1997 with the SignNet Project in Porto Alegre and Fernando Capovilla's dictionaries in São Paulo. The University of Santa Catarina at Florianópolis (UFSC) has required courses in SignWriting as the preferred form of LIBRAS transcription.

SignWriting is cited as being useful in the pedagogy of young children. http://www.signwriting.org/archive/docs6/sw0580_BR_Aquisicao_Escrita_Sinais_2007.pdf

The Federal University of Santa Catarina has accepted a dissertation written in Brazilian Sign Language using Sutton SignWriting for a master's degree in linguistics. The dissertation "The Writing of Grammatical Non-Manual Expressions in Sentences in LIBRAS Using the SignWriting System" (<https://repositorio.ufsc.br/bitstream/handle/123456789/180688/351070.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>)" by João Paulo Ampessan states that "the data indicate the need for [non-manual expressions] usage in writing sign language".

Deaf and sign language organizations

The most important deaf organization is FENEIS, the *Federação Nacional de Educação e Integração dos Surdos* (National Federation of Deaf Education and Integration). There are a number of regional organizations in Curitiba, Caxias do Sul and Rio Grande do Sul.

Classification

Wittmann (1991)^[9] posits that Brazilian Sign Language is a language isolate (a 'prototype' sign language), though one developed through stimulus diffusion from an existing sign language, likely Portuguese Sign Language and/or French Sign Language.

See also

- Ka'apor Sign Language, an unrelated Indigenous sign language of Brazil.

Footnotes

1. Brazilian Sign Language (<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/bzs>) at *Ethnologue* (22nd ed., 2019)
2. Wittmann, Henri (1991). "Classification linguistique des langues signées non vocalement." *Revue québécoise de linguistique théorique et appliquée* 10:1.215–88.^[1] (<http://www.nou-la.org/ling/1991a-class.pdf>)
3. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Brazilian Sign Language" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/braz1236>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
4. Ferreira-Brito, Lucinda and Langevin, Rémi (1994), The Sublexical Structure of a Sign Language, *Mathématiques, Informatique et Sciences Humaines* 32:125, 1994, pp. 17–40

5. LIBRAS law (in Portuguese) (<http://www.libras.org.br/leilibras.htm>) Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20050426151659/http://www.libras.org.br/leilibras.htm>) April 26, 2005, at the Wayback Machine
6. LIBRAS manual alphabet (<http://www.libras.org.br/Thumbnails/FrameSet.htm>)
7. Costa, Edivaldo da Silva (2018). "Tendências atuais da pesquisa em escrita de sinais no Brasil". *Revista Diálogos (RevDia)*. **6** (1): 23–41. ISSN 2319-0825 (<https://www.worldcat.org/isn/2319-0825>).
8. Paiva, Francisco Aulísio dos Santos; De Martino, José Mario; Barbosa, Plínio Almeida; Benetti, Ângelo; Silva, Ivani Rodrigues (2016). "Um sistema de transcrição para língua de sinais brasileira: o caso de um avatar" (<https://doi.org/10.21165/gel.v13i3.1440>). *Revista do GEL*. **13** (3): 13, 21–24. doi:10.21165/gel.v13i3.1440 (<https://doi.org/10.21165%2Fgel.v13i3.1440>).
9. Wittmann, Henri (1991). "Classification linguistique des langues signées non vocalement." *Revue québécoise de linguistique théorique et appliquée* 10:1.215–88.[2] (<http://www.nou-la.org/ling/1991a-class.pdf>)

References

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- Capovilla, F. C., and W. D. Raphael, eds. 2001. *Dicionário enciclopédico ilustrado trilingüe da Língua de Sinais Brasileira: Vols. 1 (Sinais de A a L) & 2 (Sinais de M a Z)*. [Trilingual illustrated encyclopedic dictionary of Brazilian Sign Language, Vols. 1 and 2] São Paulo: Edusp, FAPESP, Fundação Vitae, Feneis, Brasil Telecom. Volume One: ISBN 85-314-0600-5 Volume Two: ISBN 85-314-0603-X
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- Xavier, André Nogueira and Sherman Wilcox. 2014. Necessity and possibility modals in Brazilian Sign Language (Libras). *Linguistic Typology* 18(3): 449–488.

External links

- [CulturaSurda.net](http://culturasurda.net/) (<http://culturasurda.net/>) - Brazilian Deaf Cultures (much information about deaf cultures).
- Full list of online dictionaries (http://www.wikisign.org/lsf/Langue:Signes_du_Monde#Br.C3.A9sil) (in English) – (in French)
- Collection of links (<http://www.theinterpretersfriend.com/indj/dcoew/brazil.html>) by "The Interpreters Friend".
- Entrevista Com o Surdo Gay (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0483983/>) – [IMDb](#) info on movies in Brazilian Sign Language.
- [Brazilian Sing Language Alphabet](https://tinycards.duolingo.com/decks/5rC6bR88/brazilian-sign-language) (<https://tinycards.duolingo.com/decks/5rC6bR88/brazilian-sign-language>) - Learn the Brazilian Sign Language Alphabet
- Site from Brazil (<https://web.archive.org/web/20070314000401/http://www.dicionariolibras.com.br/>) – info from Brazil, very good.(Portuguese)
- Campanha Legenda Nacional (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sw152NQh3c/>) – Video, in Portuguese and Brazilian Sign Language with captioning, from the Brazilian campaign to promote captioning.

- [Dicionário de Libras Colaborativo \(https://web.archive.org/web/20130110183110/http://libras.w3ca.com.br/\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20130110183110/http://libras.w3ca.com.br/) – Collaborative Dictionary of Brazilian Sign Language.
 - [Wikisigns.org Dicionário de Libras Colaborativo \(http://www.wikisigns.org/portugues/libras-brasil/\)](http://www.wikisigns.org/portugues/libras-brasil/) – Wikisigns.org Collaborative Dictionary of Brazilian Sign Language.
 - [Surdo para Surdo - Tutoring platform for the Deaf community \(https://surdoparasurdo.com.br\)](https://surdoparasurdo.com.br/) – Tutoring platform for the Deaf community. Find Deaf tutors to learn in Sign Language.
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